



We believe our cover, carrying the Christmas message, is as timely as the seasons. . .for the Gift of Christmas is for all times and for all people – in all seasons.

About the

סֵפֶר

According to the Analytical Concordance to the Bible, the meaning of "sefer" or "sepher" is derived from the Hebrew, meaning "writing" or "book".

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This is a poem,
In the midst of poems,
Significantly different
From the rest.

This is a poem
Conceived of humor;
Not expecting to be put
To a test.

This is a poem,
Unlike many poems,
Written purely for jest.

I hope you're amused
By my short, simple rhyme
And will consider yourself
My guest.

Lawrence M. Beck

SOMETIMES. . .

Sometimes you hold me close, but don't really
touch me.
I feel our bodies touch, but not our minds --
Warm me then with a smile --
or a song --
Your voice --sarcastic, but sincere, too --
The stars twinkling above,
The silent lighting --portray your spirit --
Stars twinkling, never staying in the
same formation --constant change.
Silent lighting --gentle, but firm --
quickly revealing itself, then
disappearing --causing the audience to wait --
hoping --
Someday to find you.

Mary E. Norris

TIME -----

as illusive as a butterfly --
escapes up before we can grasp for it --
never returns to be relived --
flies on and on. . .
to give life,
to take life,
to be.

PEACE

Peace surrounds me like an envelope --
Enclosing within it love and happiness --
Sealing me with faith in tomorrow.

Mary E. Norris

COLLEGE

College is a merry-go-round.
It stops turning,
Catches its breath,
And around it goes again.

Alfonzia Miller

I'M LITTLE

I'm little
And I'm glad.
Don't want to be big;
Don't want to be bad;
Don't want to be lonely;
Don't want to be sad;
Just want to be happy. . .
Just want to be glad.
I'm little
And I'm glad.

Alfonzia Miller

SONG OF THE SEA

Sunbathers, vacationers, hippies, swingers, and sentimentalists flock to beaches every summer. Amid the crowds of laughing children and crooning honeymooners there are always a few individuals who come to the ocean front seeking more than a sun tan or a "good time." They come in search of themselves; they come to find truth.

These sensitive people feel a bond of kinship with the ocean. They see their moods powerfully reflected in the rolling sea.

The song of the sea is a different sound to those who listen. The restless hear a call to adventure and excitement in the beckoning waves. The sad and lonely hear a sigh and sob in the water heaving to and fro. The joyful watch with rapture as the water builds orgasmic peaks, then they hear the triumphant crash of the water meeting the sand on the shore. The frightened and fearful come to the beach searching for solace. They find comfort in the soothing cadence that is the pulsing heartbeat of the waters.

The fact of human mortality seems less frightening when considered on the seashore. Year after year people come to the ocean and find it unchanged. It is a landmark of certainty in our world of flux. To look over the glistening expanse to the place where sea meets sky gives a sensation of endlessness, like catching a glimpse of eternity. In this moment the nebulous ideal of an after-life is transformed into a clear picture. There is nothing to fear in the ocean's path of coming and going; rising and falling -- forever and always the same.

Sara Lyles Sanders

1

It was a cold December night with the wind and snow battering the windows. The floor was warmed by the fire hissing and spitting in the fire-place. I had a doll tied up and I was pounding it and bomb-barding it with nails when a lady, my mother, entered and stood staring at me. I turned to her holding the doll. I screamed at her and threw the doll into the fire. My mother's hair began to burn as I ran from the house.

2

The sun was shining. The grass was richly green and beautiful with its periphery of flowers, all golden. There was a tall tree at the far end of my yard surrounded by, and made attractive by many colorful flowers. There was also a music man with an organ playing happily. He had a chain that hung from his wrist but no monkey. . .and he didn't seem to notice. The scene amused and conjoled me.

As I approached, I could see that the music man was also a tippler. He was not ashamed and he tippled freely. "I am the keeper of the cats," he said in a raucous voice.

"What cats?" I asked.

"Us, of course." The voice came from above me. . .there, on the largest and lowest limb of the great tree, sat two identical, fat and dour cats. They appeared to be Cheshire Cats, (as described by Alice), though they resembled my pet cat a little. One could talk.

"You really must not stare," said the tippler. "A stare costs 50¢ while a peek costs only 5¢. You could peek nine times and maybe tire of the novelty before you've spent your 50¢."

"I'm sorry," I said and handed him a nickle.

"Then again," he said, "If you stare you will make me a richer man. . .please stare."

"No, thank you." I said.

"Oh, I say!" Declared the music man as he took a drink. "Is that your house with the firey roof? Will I have to pay to stare?"

"Of course not." I said, "You may stare."

The fire was eating at the roof. It was quite beautiful against the sun-set.

"Breath-taking. . ." announced the tippler, "and free! Quite economical too. Great for the winter cold. . ." then his attitude changed. "But then, this is spring. Its much too hot for spring. . . this is perverse." He slipped into a reverie and lugubriously mused his delima. "Perhaps in the spring you should ice your roof. . ." he muttered. He hadn't noticed that I was moving toward my car.

3

I drove down the narrow, winding, English road with the most beautiful girl of my fantasies. It was raining as usual (English summers are always damp) and the rain was seeping through my convertible top. I explained that it could be easily fixed with electrical tape. She coquettishly slid close beside me explaining it was drier and more comfortable. I smiled.

This generally prim and demure maiden of my most loving dreams was suddenly my wife and it was decorous that she should wish to be near me now as we sped to our covert. She loved me and would bear me a son, just like his father. I was happy!

4

It was a cold December night with the wind and snow battering the windows. The floor was warmed by the fire hissing and spitting in the fire-place. He had a doll tied up and was pounding it and bomb-barding it with nails when a lady, his mother. . .my wife, entered and stood staring at him. He turned to her holding the doll. I screamed as he threw the doll into the fire. My wife's hair was burning as I chased him from the house. . .

Lawrence M. Beck

THE JOYS OF GIVING

Miss Virginia Collins taught the eight year old boy's class at Sunday School. She was a maiden lady of uncertain age and firm disposition. She believed in tithing and was determined to make her young charges into generous givers in spite of themselves.

To this end, the rule was instituted to the effect that each boy was to march to the front of the class and place his offering in the plate. He was to quote a verse to express his feelings about the process of giving as he did so.

Little Johnnie Amos was first. He marched up with a pious expression on his face and deposited his dime. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." quoth Johnnie, doing his best to exude cheer. Miss Virginia beamed her approval as he returned to his seat.

Bobbie Burns came next. He put a whole quarter in the plate. Said Bobbie with an air of conviction which he could well afford, since his father was President of the local bank, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Little Willie Carroll seemed to be somewhat uncertain about the whole thing. He reluctantly dragged himself to the front of the room. He opened his fist and looked at the lone nickle in the palm of his hand. Finally, with a sigh, he put the coin in the plate. Said Willie, "A fool and his money are soon parted."

ANGRY YOUNG MAN

Angry young man
Who hates the world
Won't you tell me why?
Angry young man
Who never laughs
and is much too proud to cry,
Tell me, please, what to do
to see your rare, sweet smile.
Stay with me, let me try
to love you for a while.

Cheryl Black

A MILLION MOONBEAMS

A million moon beams,
A thousand rainbows
I'd give you if I could.
Peace and joy,
Love and happiness,
Every thing that is good.
All my love. . .
All my laughter. . .
And toast and coffee
the morning after. . . .

Cheryl Black

THE CLOSED DOOR

Pockets of Black Dust filtrated
The room
And an ominous voice in
A brazen Parlor
Cried out--"Let us be!"
So the strings of time
And the gravity
Uplifted their fiery fingers
from this belligerent sphere.

"Go your way,"
They smiled and
The moon, stars, sun, rain
Followed behind
with a mutual verdict.

The men smiled
And they flickered their pots
with smirky remarks
continued their vacuous channels,
So crazed with this night
They imbeciled the Pure Light
no more
In this world of the new centurian,
But death lured them on
Till they collapsed in their fears.

Began praying
Began searching
For time and the memorable divinity.
But it was too late. . .
The Door had Closed.

Susan Somers

WHO AM I

Am I a single raindrop
glistening on a leaf,
dropping to the ground
gone for ever

or

merging with other
raindrops into a solid
flowing stream.

Yes, I am a raindrop
in the twinkling brook of man.

Patty S. Harber

Where. . .
are the flowers ?

Look about your place in the Sun.
Can't you see the autumn rain showers ?

Isn't it glorious. . .
To See
To Be. . .You. . .and me. . .?

How great that glow of gold. . .
It is God's New World mold. . .

(My God, view that red. . .
Like wine. . .it soars to the head)

What beauty. . .
A swirl. . .all around. . .

Yes. . .for a while. . .(and we sigh)
It will die. . .

But there is promise for tomorrow. . .
No reason for sorrow. . .

Flowers, golds and reds
of autumn will all return from Winter beds. . .

(While we wait for Spring. . .
There are memories that bless. . .and burn. . .)

And purify. . .
Understanding
When we're ready. . .to learn. . .

Dr. Jim Edmondson
October 1974

COUNTRY ROADS

Leaves, rusted, fallen. . .
Spiny frames blossoming flowerless skulls,
Infant furry greens
Naked
Needles matted by mud,
Peas plastered
By rotted corn stalks.
Clay dried now,
Sanded beginnings of desert
Acres of dying roads,
Stranded
Hills in high tide
Tossing waves of wooded
Dirt. . .

Susan Somers

PHASE # 1

The blue sky wraps its
Coolness around me.
The billowy clouds dance
And bow down before me.
The sun, with its rays of gold,
stretches fingers out to touch my face.
The fragrant grass beckons me
To come and rest. . .
Lets me know. . .
Makes me feel. . .
That God made this world
For me !

Enroh

MY LOVE

One cold winter night I came into your life,
As a little child with a heavy job.
By some I was received with joy,
But by others I was a challenge of superiority.

As I grew in mind and stature,
My job became more of a reality.
So, I set out learning and questioning,
Getting all of what I needed to have that job done.

The day came when I was ready to go out. . .
Into the vast weary world.
My staff began with twelve men
And they learned from me,
Taught my words
And taught my deeds.

I was a doctor to the sick;
A reliever to the soul.
I was a comfort to the weary,
An answer to all.
Yes, these and many more I AM!
So, I came to tell you!

It wasn't long before my authority
Induced sweet affliction to my body.
On cross bar sticks
I did my job for you, for my Father,
out of my love.

Long lives my name;
To the hated,
The hater
The helpful,
The unhelpful,

Long lives my name to all!
With the words, works and name of JESUS CHRIST
I bind love, peace, brotherhood and the kingdom.

O'Violet J. Greene

Once, a lot of children
Came knocking at my door.
They smiled, "We're at your service."
So I gave them each a chore.

One washed my windows.
Two more mopped my floor.
The girls all got my dinner,
But still there was one more.

"Sir, I too would like to help."
Said a young lad, oh-so-small.
I said, "Just sit and talk to me.
That's the best help of all."

And when the children finished
And it was time for them to play,
I gave them each a penny
And sent them on their way.

And to my tiny friend I said,
"Thank you for a job well done."
And he looked at me, as if to ask,
"Is friendship ever done?"

Lawrence M. Beck

In this world,
There exists an abundance of beauty.

I'm made sad to see you blinded
By that force called love;
Called loneliness.

Truely,
Even the wise man
Knows not the difference.

Lawrence M. Beck

You'll awaken one morning
Where my voice can't be heard. . .
My fingers can't touch your face. . .
My eyes can't see your eyes. . .
Only my silence touches your silence.

You'll feel the same way I'll feel;
Saddened that my tears
Can't wet your lips.

Lawrence M. Beck

ENCOUNTER ON THE SAND

I caressed its curled and sandy edges,
I peered into its pearly pink soul.
And when I pressed it gently to my ear,
I heard a somber sound inside.

I turned it over and over unceasingly,
For it held special mystery.
It wasn't just a shell upon the sand,
It was a spirit beckoning me.

I perceived some faint and wavy image
Upon its ivory surface.
It pulsed and throbbed within my hands;
It almost lived! It nearly breathed!

A voice within its cavernous depths
Gurgled, choaked, then cried!
"I am alive, can you feel me?"

My hands froze stiff around it;
"What apparition lives therein?
What gall to call on me
To save it from its torture!"

"What am I to do?" I desperately cried,
"You've come, have you not, to rescue me?
Surely it is time!" it replied,
"I've waited all these many years!"

"My stay is done, my dues are paid.
My crimes of life are reconciled.
Just place my shell in the shallow water.
Remission and liberty at last!"

In blind and passive submission
I complied with his wishes.
I laid the shell in the shallow water
And, nonresisting, stood silently by to see.

The salty tide splashed over the shell,
And a trickle of blood oozed out.
It streamed and then gushed,
And then with the salt and sand, it fused.

It emerged from the sea,
A whole and consummate being.
But through its eyes and hazy ribs,
I saw the ocean beyond.

"I've known you for years," he said.
"But you didn't know me.
I've known, too, you would come
And see, and rescue me."

"But, why now, all alone on the sand?
Why here, why do you call me now?
Other times there have been
When life treated me worse."

"This is no suitable time; not just now!
I've found confidence and security;
You, yourself, should see
My future holds a fortune of bright little beads!"

Death saw through me and sneered.
His eyes of darkness penetrated mine;
He raised a skinless arm,
And he pointed a skeletal finger at me.

Obediently, as I knew I must,
I plunged the sharp point of the shell
Deep into my heart, as he had once done,
and I felt the pain.

"My Life gushed into the shell;
And in smooth pursuit; my fluid being ran.
In its cavernous depths I now repose;
Till in a millenium or two my freedom I'll pursue."

Carole Phillips

THE HORSE

The local college was in dire financial difficulties. President George Spence put on a one-man campaign to remedy the situation. He called on all of the big business men of the state for donations and endowments. His visits even included "Big Bill Ellis" who owned the Upsand Downs Race Track and had a finger on every gambling activity in the state.

In general, the response was somewhat less than princely. Big Bill Ellis was the lone exception to this trend. He offered to make an outright grant of one million dollars. The only condition attached to the grant was that the college should confer a degree on his favorite race horse. President Spence accepted on the spot.

Graduation day came and the ceremonies were held out of doors to accomodate the horse. After all of the preliminaries, including the commencement address, were out of the way, the big moment arrived. The horse was led to the front to receive his degree. President Spence felt called upon to make a few appropriate remarks.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said the President, "in all my thirty years as an administrator, this is the first time that it has been my pleasure and honor to confer a degree on a whole horse."

Dr. Robert Carroll

FUN, THANKS, AND HAPPY

Fall is the time of the year
When paths of dryness appear.
The pumpkins in the fields
Make unusual faces and wheel
Around the bend on the last
Of the tenth, and never pass
Without making a dredful sound,
Until their treat is found.
After the funny day has gone away,
The big birds want to go astray
Because they know it's time to turn,
And others are much concerned.
When the thankful day has made its cheer,
The Big Day is almost here.
Lifts its head from way down low
And comes walking, "Ho, ho, ho."

Alfonzia Miller

"Please come to me." She said.
"Please come to me and stay forever."
And I came, not realizing 'forever.'

She teased me and comforted me
And gave completely of herself.
She took completely of me
And was made easily happy.

Her words proved true;
Her love proved truer.
Her beauty proved the truest of poems.

"Please come to me," She said, "and stay - 'Forever'
And I came, not realizing 'forever.'

And when one day she'd gone too soon
I cried, "This can't be forever!"
And I cursed God; and I cursed truth;
And I cursed death!
I cursed life and time and 'Forever'
For being too soon finished.

Lawrence M. Beck

Feel the raging of a heart
That is tortured with pain.
Know that the eyes are as filled with tear drops
As the sky is with rain.
Imagine the mind frustrated, half insane
With resolute endeavors, all in vane.

Tomorrow begins a new day.
We'll start it all alone,
With memories of each other
And the memory that you're gone.
But a smile will touch my lips
Thinking of the good times we used to share;
And I'll laugh, or I'll cry, to think:
I fell for you. . .

Lawrence M. Beck

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Is it mine?
Is it being?
Is it seeing
For the first time?
It is mine!
Joy of friends. . .
The way a tree bends. . .
Now I know. . .
I reap as I sow. . .
What is happiness?
Those who care
Know. . .
It is finding
Completeness
of the Soul.

LIFE

Life
How does one persist?
Life
Must there be a way?
Life
Live as you see fit.
Live!
Are there not those who do resist?
Life
My life. . .did you say?
Life
I live. . .because He taught me to pray.
Living
Is more than existing
When God defines -- directs.

Dr. Jim Edmondson
October 1974

“He drew a circle that shut me out -
heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win;
we drew a circle that took him in.”

Paul, Philippians 1:9-- 11

Edwin Markman translation 1852--1940

I pray for this:
that your love may become more and more inclusive,
resulting in your having insight, keen awareness,
and the ability to recognize in all, the things that
really matter,
so that you may be transparent and unblamable
before the eyes of Christ,
having made available to all, the results of the
justice which comes to all through Jesus Christ
and magnifies the glory of God in praise.

Paul, Philippians 1:9-- 11

Carlton Winbery translation '74

THE SEA

I have a deep
and lasting passion
for the Sea.
No other lover
holds such fascination
just for me.
The ocean roar;
The sunlit shore
Entices me
Eternally.
Seabirds swoop low
and then soar high
Whitecaps reach up'
toward the sky.
The gray-green color of the sea
Stretches as far as the eye can see;
Stretches on into immortality.

Cheryl Black

NIGHT THINGS

Whenever I'm alone at night
I keep my eyes closed very tight
To keep out all the things that might
Come to haunt me in the night.

Cheryl Black

Yesterday was a beautiful time.
I had no worries and the world was mine.
 I had no playmates, but I didn't care,
 I had my mother who was always there.
Somehow. . .yesterday has gotten away.

Yesterday was a happy day
With the bugs I chased and the games I played.
 I didn't have money, but I didn't care,
 I could search for honey or steal a pear.
Somehow. . .yesterday has gotten away.

Yesterday was a memorable life
For a poor country boy and my happy laughing wife.
 We didn't have much, but we didn't care,
 We ran through the hills and found happiness there.
Somehow. . .yesterday has gotten away.

Yesterday was exciting and fun.
I loved to go fishing with my six-year-old son.
 We used to climb trees and throw rocks in the lake;
 And on his seventh birthday, we had chocolate cake.
Somehow. . .yesterday has gotten away.

Yesterday has come and gone.
Its taken my wife. . .and its taken my son.
 God knows, out of life, I never asked for much
 And what I've gotten, I can't even touch.
Yesterday has surely gotten away.

Yesterday means everything to a poor old man,
Who sits in the park and stares at the sand.
 Alone with my memories; alone with my tears;
 Alone with the thought, "I've reached the end of my years. . .
And who cares if yesterday has gotten away?

Lawrence M. Beck

Sitting on your leg, eyes closed;
Your finger in your book,
Wearing the smile that you chose
So long ago now.
A familiar tune is dancing in your head.
What is that tune?

A salad before you;
21 years behind you;
A mountain of love within you,
An ocean of frustrations without you.
How many they were!

Your smile. . .
It works, it's good
And it's nice to relax for a while,
But you mustn't forget to wear it;
It's in style (has been for years).
It makes a lot of friends at parties. . .
Why are there so many parties?

Tell me,
When you're alone with
Your reflection, what do you see?
Is she not more serious?
 She doesn't smile, does she?
Ah, but she is protected in a glass cage. . .
I see.
What was that tune?
Who was he?

Lawrence M. Beck

When we have done with the
 Complementing of each other
There is nothing left but the 'good-bye,'
The return of all borrowed things
And the haunting questions, "Why. . .
And how did we let it go so far?"

Yesterday, we were lonely
And begging God for a friend;
Someone with compassion
Who could mend -
 Our weary egos.

Now, today, we are whole again.
Forget you, God; forget you, friend.
Today there are no clouds and no rain.
Again. . .
We're chasing the rainbow's end.

Lawrence M. Beck

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